CLAIMS:

1.   A method of correcting defects in image data comprising an array of pixels, the method comprising:

          sampling (5) the intensity of pixels of the image data in each side of a defect;

          calculating (6) differences between the sampled intensities to generate one or more first intensity difference signals (D1, D2) indicative of intensity differences across the defect;

          calculating (6) differences between the sampled intensities to generate one or more second intensity difference signals (D3, D4) indicative of an intensity difference on each respective side of the defect, and

          correcting (7-11) the defect in dependence on the first and second intensity difference signals (D1-D4), a defect being replaced by an average of surrounding pixels if said first and second intensity difference signals do not exceed a predetermined level value (L1,L2).

2.   A method according to claim 1, wherein the sampling step (5) comprises sampling the intensity of three pixels on each side of the defect, and wherein the calculating step (6) comprises two intensity difference signals (D1, D2) across a defect, and one intensity difference signal (D3, D4) at each side of the defect

3.   A method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

          comparing (7) the intensity difference signals (D1-D4) with the predetermined level value (L1, L2) to generate (7) a first control signal (AC) if any one of the intensity difference signals (D1-D4) is above the predetermined level value (L1, L2), and a second control signal (DC) if all of the intensity difference signals are below the predetermined level value (L1, L2).

4.   A method according to claim 3, wherein the predetermined level value (L1, L2) is determined by calibration of an apparatus for which the method is used.

5.   A method according to claim 3, wherein the predetermined level signal (L1, L2) comprises a first level signal (L1) and a second level signal (L2).

5   6.   A method according to claim 3, further comprising the additional step of assessing (9) a size of the defect if the first control signal (AC) is generated.

7.   A method according to claim 6, further comprising employing average correction techniques (8) if the first control signal (AC) is generated and the size of the defect
10   is large (L).

8.   A method according to claim 6, further comprising employing no defect pixel value correction if the size of the defect is small (S).

15   9.   A method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of assessing (10) the level of good nearby pixels in the event that the defect size is medium (M).

10.   A method according to claim 9, wherein no defect pixel value correction (11) is employed if the level of the good nearby pixels is relatively small (NS).

20   11.   A method according to claim 9, wherein average correction techniques (8) are employed if the level of the good nearby pixels is relatively large (NL).

12.   Apparatus for correcting defects in image data comprising an array of pixels,
25   the apparatus comprising:

           means (5) for sampling the intensity of pixels of the image data in each side of the defect;

           means (6) for calculating differences between the sampled intensities to generate one or more first intensity difference signals (D1, D2) indicative of intensity
30   differences across the defect;

           means (6) for calculating differences between the sampled intensities to generate one or more first intensity difference signals (D1, D2) indicative of intensity differences across the defect; and

means (7-11) for correcting the defect in dependence on the intensity difference signals (D1-D4), a defect being replaced by an average of surrounding pixels if said first and second difference signals do not exceed a predetermined reference value (L1,L2).

13.   A camera, comprising:

an image sensor (S4) for furnishing image data; and

an apparatus for correcting defects in the image data as claimed in claim 12.